

1 **TOWN OF CHESTER**
2 **SELECTBOARD MEETING**
3 **March 2, 2022, Draft Minutes**

4 **Board Members Present:** Arne Jonynas, Ben Whalen, Lee Gustafson, Heather Chase, and Leigh
5 Dakin at Town Hall.

6 **Staff Present:** Julie Hance, Town Manager, at Town Hall; and Susan Bailey, Secretary, via Zoom.

7 **Visitors Present:** Bill Lindsay, Harry Goodell, Phil Perlah, Shawn Cunningham for the Chester
8 Telegraph, Sharon Huntley. Shawntae Stillwell, Editor of Vermont Journal, at Town Hall; and Tim
9 Roper, Scott Blair, Cynthia Prairie, Linda Diak, iPad (identity unknown), and SAPA TV via Zoom.

10 **Call to Order**

11 Julie Hance called the meeting to order at 6:02 p.m. with the pledge of allegiance. She welcomed
12 everyone to the meeting. She said they would start with nominations for Chair. Heather made a
13 motion, which Lee seconded, for Arne as Chair. The motion passed unanimously, and Julie handed
14 the meeting over to Arne. Arne thanked the board for their confidence in him.

15
16 **Agenda Item 1, Reorganization**

17 Arne asked for nominations for Vice Chair. Leigh nominated Heather and Ben nominated Lee for
18 Vice Chair. Arne asked if there was any discussion. Ben thought they were both great options.
19 Heather was willing to continue to do it if the board wanted her to. She was also okay with the
20 board shaking it up a bit because Lee was a good guy. Lee said he wouldn't mind taking on the
21 role. Arne wondered if they needed a paper ballot. He took a roll call vote. Lee got 2 votes and
22 Heather had 3. As a result, Heather became the Vice Chair. Lee congratulated her.

23 Arne said nominations for Clerk to the Selectboard. Leigh nominated Lee. There were no other
24 nominations. The board voted and Lee became the Clerk to the Selectboard.

25 Ben asked if they would discuss meeting dates and times, which had been the first and third
26 Wednesdays and was working well. Arne was aware that when Ben had previously been on the
27 board, the 6:00 meeting time was a little tight for him. Ben agreed and suggested Tuesdays at 6:30,
28 if it worked for others. Heather said she could do Tuesdays but had committed to something for
29 the next three months. Arne said he also had a conflict. Ben suggested continuing Wednesdays but
30 at 6:30. There was discussion that the meetings had at one time, been 7:00 p.m. Ben realized 7
31 p.m. was late. The members were willing to compromise to 6:30 p.m. The board voted
32 unanimously to hold meetings on the first and third Wednesdays at 6:30 p.m.

33
34 **Agenda Item 2, Approve minutes from the February 16, 2022, Meeting**

35 Lee moved to approve the February 16th minutes and Leigh seconded. Arne asked if there were
36 any corrections. Leigh said on page 3, line 2, the word tables should have been tabs. The motion
37 passed unanimously with the correction.

38 **Agenda Item 3, Citizens Comments/Answers from Previous Meeting**

39 Tim Roper requested Leigh to move her mike closer so they could hear her better. Leigh forgot
40 and thanked Tim for reminding her.

1 Linda Diak thought Julie had been doing a fantastic job. Arne said given they were in the middle
2 of her evaluation, he appreciated it and thought that would go a long way.

3 **Agenda Item 4, Old Business**

4 Report given by the Town Manager:

5 Winter Carnival

6 Winter Carnival weekend was a great success this year. Matt McCarthy tried a few new things,
7 and they had a Winter Carnival committee. They had some new features. They brought in a
8 gentleman who did ice carving. They also had fire sculptures. They had a snowshoe hike, but due
9 to the lack of snow it was more of a hike. They plan to include them in future years, as they were
10 great additions. A lot of people were at the Pinnacle on Saturday and a lot attended the broom
11 hockey on Sunday. Next year they are hoping to get additional teams and Julie will be talking to
12 Chester Fire Department about a team. It was a big draw for Chester. She thanked Matt McCarthy,
13 Scott Blair, and Lee Witting. Arne mentioned the little snowmobiles for the kids were a hit. Julie
14 added they also loved Peter Hudkins with the horses. Arne said the horses were over 2,000 pounds.
15 Leigh enjoyed the ice sculptures on the Academy lawn.

16 Speeding

17 Julie received an email from a property owner on Andover Road with concerns about getting the
18 speed radar signs erected. They have been ordered and are on backorder with an anticipated arrival
19 date of May. As soon as it is received, it will go up. The police are patrolling more often and
20 working hard to be more visible.

21 Public Safety Department

22 They have had a few meetings and will meet again on Friday. They are looking to start adding
23 some community events over the summer, such as a community breakfast on Saturdays. It would
24 be a way to bring community members in. They are looking at hosting an open-house type event
25 in late summer or early fall and would consist of demonstrations in the field that's been cleared.
26 Stay tuned for details on the community events they are working on.

27 Solar Farm

28 Jim and Julie have had some lengthy discussions involving the solar farm and she hoped it would
29 be on the next agenda. The first hurdle they need to overcome is that Jim isn't entirely of the
30 opinion the town had the authority to own a utility. He is researching it. Julie has emailed other
31 municipalities to learn how they do it. The ones they are aware of are not owned directly by the
32 municipality but a separate entity within the municipality. Jim is looking into the finer details to
33 find some precedence. Lee said in his mind, the solar field is not a utility but a generation facility.
34 Julie said if they were to purchase the solar field, they would be generating as well as selling
35 because they would be buying a contract from two other people who are purchasing solar. Unless
36 they figure out how to buy out the contracts, they would be the utility owner generating and selling
37 power to these two other entities. He is researching the law and precedence to see what is involved
38 and if there is authority before they spend any more time. Lee would ask for clarification from
39 someone he works with about this. Lee thought even if they were selling, they would just be a
40 generating facility that has excess power they would be selling to someone else. Arne wondered if
41 there were no contracts to honor, would it be enough to supply all of Chester's electrical needs.
42 Lee thought so, or at least a lot of the town's bill. Ben thought after 25 years they would start

1 making less power. Lee said it was a prorated warranty and they were guaranteed to make 80 or
2 85% at the 25-year mark. They degrade in the first few years but slowly after that. Lee said solar
3 panels in outer space over 50 years old still make power.

4 Julie said once Jim determined if they had the authority to own it, the next step would be to do an
5 analysis of revenue stream with the other two contracts, as well as expense. From there, you would
6 need to authorize an appraiser. A mutually agreed upon appraiser would prepare a 2022 modern
7 day current evaluation.

8 She didn't know it would be ready for the next meeting, but it was coming.

9 Arne asked if any board members had anything to discuss and they did not.

10 **Agenda Item 5, Annual Appointments**

11 Arne read through the annual appointments.

12 Animal Control Officer for one year: Police Chief

13 Cemetery Sexton: Jeffrey Sheldon

14 Connecticut River Authority: remains open

15 Senior Solutions: Linda Stowell

16 Emergency Manager: Town Manager

17 Fence Viewers: Frank Balch, Jack Cable, Tony Weinberger

18 First Constable: Adam Woodell

19 Green Up Day Chairman: Frank Kelley

20 Inspector of Lumber, Shingles and Wood: Tony Weinberger

21 Pound Keeper: Police Chief

22 Julie Hance volunteered to take over the position of Regional Planning Representative as
23 replacement for Tom Bock who moved out of town. Arne thanked him for all his years of service
24 and thanked Julie for stepping up. There is a lot that goes on there that affects Chester.

25 Regional Planning Commission Alternative: Derek Suursoo

26 Road Commissioner: Town Manager

27 Secretary to Selectboard: Susan Bailey

28 Board of Wastewater Disposal: Selectboard

29 Solid Waste District Representative: Derek Suursoo

30 Solid Waste District Representative Alternate: Alden Blodgett

31 Town Service Officer: Town Manager. Arne asked what this position did. Julie thought the Town
32 Service Officer was if there was a lawsuit against town.

33 Transportation Advisory Council: Kirby Putnam. Arne had been doing it for the past 6 or 7 years.
34 Kirby, who is the Town Highway Foreman, would be taking over the position, which involves
35 roads, bridges, and a lot of things related to the work that Kirby does. Arne thanked him for
36 stepping up. Arne will be the alternate.

1 Tree Warden: Joseph Epler

2 Water Commissioners: Selectboard

3 Weigher of Coal: Tony Weinberger

4 Arne thanked all the folks on the list for stepping up and volunteering for the community. He
5 hoped to get someone for the Connecticut River Authority.

6 Heather moved to accept the list of 2022 appointments, as read by Arne, and Lee seconded it. A
7 vote was taken, and the motion passed unanimously.

8 **Agenda Item 6, Paper of Record**

9 Arne said every year they must designate a paper of record. Last year they designated two, one
10 was strictly online and the other in print and online. Shawntae Stillwell, Publisher of the Vermont
11 Journal, said it was unfortunate they got off on the wrong foot last year and wanted to move
12 forward and start a new chapter with the Selectboard and the town. They have continuously
13 covered Chester's news, being selectboard meetings, school board meetings, budgets, events, new
14 businesses openings and updates – all the highlights their readers enjoy weekly or regularly. She
15 thought it was great the town's notices were online and in newspaper because it helped reach more
16 people. She thought they shared the same goal of reaching as many people as possible. Moving
17 forward, she hoped they could reconsider the Vermont Journal as their printed paper of record.
18 She thanked them for their time and consideration. Lee asked her what their readership was. In
19 Chester, they have about 2,000 papers going to all the mailboxes; and online, about 20,000 to
20 25,000 viewers per month. She noted Chester is their second highest readership online in the state.
21 Arne appreciated her speaking to them and the coverage they have had over the years. Leigh asked
22 if \$13 per column inch was higher this year. Shawntae said she had raised rates 50 cents this year.

23 There was nobody present from The Commons.

24 Cynthia Prairie of The Chester Telegraph offered to answer any questions about service over the
25 past year. She thought they had a good working relationship and was happy with the response
26 they've gotten to the notices published. Lee noticed when he tried to read an article on their
27 website, he got a pop-up blocker. To him, it was frustrating and concerning that he didn't have
28 free access. Cynthia said last year they took their ads and gave them to a different company, so
29 they don't host their ads anymore. If you have an ad blocker on, you can't see the ads on The
30 Telegraph. It's a prompt to take your ad blocker off and most people do. She also suggested
31 whitelisting The Telegraph, which doesn't cost anything. The company they contract with will
32 walk someone through the steps to whitelist The Telegraph at no charge. They have 23 customers
33 who insist on keeping the adblocker on but want to read The Telegraph. People have contacted
34 her, and she connects them with the company who shows them how to do a workaround. There
35 are so many adblockers available that sometimes people put them on their computer unknowingly.
36 Lee asked her if it was possible to identify the ISP location and allow access to the articles without
37 needing to disable the adblocker. Cynthia said you could disable it only for The Telegraph and no
38 other websites. Lee thought it was frustrating to need to go through another step or two just to read
39 an article, but he understood why they were doing it. Cynthia said maybe she and Lee could speak
40 after the meeting and get some information about what he would like her to do because the
41 company is very responsive and maybe she could help him out. Arne asked if the ads on the side
42 come through. Julie said she received an email that morning from an individual in town who had
43 the same issue. She said it was important to note that if you block ads, you're not going to see the

1 ads. Shawn Cunningham spoke about a customer that wasn't seeing the ads on the side. Cynthia
2 noted at the top of the page is a link to the Chester Public Notices that would appear when selected
3 even if an adblocker was installed. Arne asked if anyone else had any comments concerning The
4 Chester Telegraph and there were none.

5 Arne said last year they had paper of record in print and a paper of record online. He asked if they
6 budgeted both for this year. Julie said they carried the same budget as last year but kept it to things
7 that only had to be advertised in both. She thought it was worth it to stick with both. She said it
8 worked well and reached more people: those who only read online and those who pick up a
9 physical paper. She said the law has not changed. Arne said he would go with The Vermont Journal
10 over The Commons. Lee agreed with Arne. Leigh, who had an email from someone saying they
11 weren't where they have been in the past. She also said The Commons' coverage doesn't cover
12 the local area. Julie wanted to thank The Commons, as they had stepped up in a major way and
13 said they saved them from an issue. The consensus of the board was to appoint the Vermont Journal
14 and The Chester Telegraph as the official papers of record. Lee asked if they had to appoint one
15 as the official paper of record and Julie said they both could be appointed. Heather thought down
16 the road they may be able to have one paper of record but presently agreed with everyone it was
17 the way to go.

18 Lee moved and Ben seconded to appoint the Vermont Journal and The Chester Telegraph as the
19 papers of record. Ben said it was now his fifth time of doing a paper of record and it was the first
20 time they had nice conversations. He said they may say in the future they only need to do one but
21 if it's working well and isn't a significant cost, they are getting more viewers. Ben said he reads
22 The Telegraph online and is certainly excited to see the Vermont Journal in his mailbox.

23 Julie said the cost hadn't changed. In 2020, with one source it was \$3,300, last year was \$3,230.
24 In zoning notices in 2020, it was \$2,800 and this year it was \$3,800. So, they were talking \$1,000.
25 Arne said it was well worth it to reach as many as possible. Heather agreed. Lee wanted to echo
26 what Ben said about Shawntae and he appreciated her willingness to work with them and be open
27 and upfront.

28 A vote was taken, and the motion carried unanimously.

29 **Agenda Item 7, New Business/Next Agenda**

30 Two next meetings will be the DBR and Planning Commission appointments. The interviews will
31 be conducted tonight for those appointments. Julie hoped the solar farm would be on the next
32 agenda. At some point in April, SoVerA would like to make a presentation to the board regarding
33 a project they are working on for Chester. Lee said considering the voters approving the retail
34 cannabis sales, he still had a lot of unanswered questions and thought they needed to have a
35 conversation regarding things of significance and wanted it on a future agenda. Julie asked if there
36 was anything he wanted her to come prepared with or just have it on the agenda for general
37 discussion. Lee said he wanted to have discussion regarding adult-oriented zoning if that was
38 something they wanted to discuss, and he didn't know if they had any say in it or could recommend
39 to the Planning Commission it was something to look at. He wanted to figure out exactly what
40 their role, responsibilities, and obligations were pursuant to what the state was allowing them to
41 do.

42 Arne thought what may affect them was having a cannabis control committee at a local level. If
43 they decided to go that route, he thought they could investigate everything Lee was talking about.

1 As far as zoning and regulations and rules, Arne thought it would be the Planning Commission.
2 They wouldn't be able to give them direction because they would be presenting anything that
3 comes forward to the board for approval later. If that was the case, maybe they should have a
4 discussion as a board before making any recommendation or talking to the Planning Commission
5 regarding the issue. He thought a good start would be the Cannabis Control Commission and they
6 would take it from there.

7 Arne asked if there was anything else for future agenda items. There were none.

8 **Agenda Item 8, Executive Session: Interviews for Planning Commission and Development**
9 **Review Board Positions**

10 Leigh moved and Heather seconded to go into executive session. A vote was taken and approved
11 unanimously. The board entered executive session at 6:49 p.m.

12 Heather moved and Leigh seconded to end the executive session for interviews. A vote was taken
13 and approved, and the board ended executive session at 8:23 p.m.

14 **Agenda Item 9, Executive Session: Town Manger Review**

15 Heather moved and Leigh seconded to go into executive session for town manager review. A vote
16 was taken and passed, and the board entered executive session at 8:24 p.m.

17 Heather moved and Leigh seconded to end the executive session for town manager review. A vote
18 was taken and passed, and the board ended executive session at 8:55 p.m.

19 **Agenda Item 10, Adjourn**

20 Heather moved and Lee seconded to adjourn. A vote was taken and passed, and the meeting
21 adjourned at 8:55 p.m.

22